



**434th Air Refueling Wing
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Fact Sheet

Grissom Air Reserve Base

The history of Grissom Air Reserve Base dates to July 1, 1942 when it was opened by the U.S. Navy. At that time it was named Bunker Hill Naval Air Station and served as a training base for naval pilots. During the four years of Bunker Hill NAS, thousands of pilots were trained for the Navy, Marines and Coast Guard. One of its most famous alumni of Bunker Hill NAS is former major league baseball star Ted Williams.

After the war, the base was closed and it reverted to its former use as farmland. With the outbreak of the Korean War, the Air Force needed a base where it could conduct nationwide and worldwide operations. Again, Bunker Hill became the logical choice. Negotiations were begun with the Navy to reopen the base as Bunker Hill Air Force Base.

The base was reopened as a Tactical Air Command Base on June 22, 1954. That year, the 4433rd Air Base Squadron and the 323rd Fighter-Bomber Wing called Bunker Hill Air Force Base home. In 1955, the Air Defense Command's 319th Fighter Interceptor Squadron joined the forces at the base.

The Strategic Air Command arrived on the scene in the mid-fifties and SAC's 8th Air Force assumed jurisdiction of the base on September 1, 1957.

In May 1959, the 305th Bomb Group and its B-47s arrived. Later that same year, the first KC-135 Stratotankers were assigned to the unit. Two years later, B-58s began replacing the B-47s.

After 26 years of bearing the name Bunker Hill, the base was renamed on May 12, 1968 after Lieutenant Colonel Virgil I. "Gus" Grissom, a native of Mitchell, Ind., who was one of the original seven astronauts. Colonel Grissom was killed during a fire in his Apollo capsule while still on the launching pad at Cape Kennedy, Fla.

On Jan. 1, 1970, the 305th Bomb Group was replaced by the 305th Air Refueling Wing and Grissom became one of the largest tanker bases in the country.

The Air Force Reserve became part of the Grissom community in 1971 when the 434th Special Operations Wing and its A-37 aircraft moved to the base. For the next 23 years Grissom was home to both active duty and reserve personnel.

In 1978, a second Air Force Reserve unit joined the scene. At the height of its operations, the base was home to one active duty wing, two Air Force Reserve units, 60 KC-135 Stratotankers, and 18 A-10 Thunderbolt II fighter aircraft.

Due to changes in the Air Force mission, two units (one reserve, one active duty) were deactivated in 1994. In October of that year, Grissom was realigned as an Air Force Reserve facility. Today, the base is home to the 434th Air Refueling Wing and is one of only four Air Reserve Bases in the nation.

The base's tenant organizations include Army Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve and Navy Reserve units.

Grissom Air Reserve Base plays an important part in the Indiana economy. It has a combined military-civilian work force and is the largest employer in Miami county.

Current as of April 2003